

# Report on Master Thesis

Institute of Economic Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University in Prague

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|----------------------|--|
| Student:             | Alžběta Kočová   |
| Advisor:             | Barbara Pertold-Gebicka                                    |
| Title of the thesis: | Experimentální výzkum diskriminace matek na pracovním trhu |

## **OVERALL ASSESSMENT** *(provided in English, Czech, or Slovak):*

The master thesis by Alžběta Kočová assumed a very ambitious goal of investigating whether mothers who spent different number of years on parental leave are treated differentially by potential employers. This topic was motivated by the recent discussion about the “right” length of parental leave in the Czech context and by findings presented in one PhD dissertation defended at CERGE last year which showed that mothers returning to work earlier than after the classical 3 years experience higher post-leave unemployment rates.

As the relationship between leave length and the probability of finding a job might be driven by both the supply and demand factors – namely by self-selection of females who decide when to look for employment and by the decisions of employers whether to hire them or not – it is difficult to capture potential differential treatment by employers using observational data. Thus Alžběta decided to take advantage of an economic experiment that allows to control mother’s decisions and just observe the reactions of employers. The experiment involved sending fake resumes to job advertisements. There were three different groups of resumes: mothers looking for employment just after two years spent on parental leave (short leave treatment), mothers looking for employment just after three years spent on parental leave (long leave treatment), and a control leave of mothers who have older children who have already worked after their last parental leave. This setup allows the author to measure response rates generated by each group of resumes – i.e. see what fraction of job applications were invited for an interview.

This experiment generating interesting findings – namely that “long leave mothers” are invited to job interviews more often than “short leave mothers”. To find out what might drive this difference Alžběta further conducted a survey among HR specialists with the aim to uncover their perceptions of job candidates from each of the three treatment groups and uncover their general attitudes towards combining motherhood and career. I will leave it to the student to present the results of the survey and discuss potential pathways that might explain the observed difference between job invitation rates of long and short leave mothers.

As the supervisor I have to stress that this project is much more ambitious and spacious than a usual master thesis. It involved a very long stage of planning when we had to discuss potential channels potentially affecting differential treatment of mothers with different parenting experience in the labor market and design our treatment groups such that we are able to uncover these. Alžběta was very active and brought in many important insights during this stage of experiment preparation. The experiment itself was very time consuming. Each day Alžběta (with some help from a fellow student) browsed through an online database of job advertisements, selected relevant advertisements and replied to them sending two resumes of different treatments according to the previously prepared randomization plan. Mailboxes of our fictitious job candidates had to be controlled every day to note whether they were invited for interviews and to respond to these invitations immediately. In the period between December 2015 and April 2016 resumes were sent in response to 470 job advertisements. Nevertheless data collection proceeds until now with the goal to respond to 1000 job advertisements and turn the presented thesis into a research article.

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In her thesis Alžběta describes the rationale behind potential differential treatment of mothers in the labor market very well. She also provides a in-depth literature review proving that she really took a lot of effort to get into the topic. The experiment description is also very detailed and self-explanatory. It again proves that the student is well aware of the nuances of experimental design and the necessity of proper randomization. What constitutes a bit weaker part of the thesis is the data analysis. It is well executed and the interpretation of obtained results is correct, but the presentation could be somehow more professional. This small deficit is driven by short time span Alžběta had for the final analysis given that experimental data were collected till April 2016. Taking this time into account I have to say that the student did a great job analyzing the data from different angles and uncovering several interesting findings.

In sum I have to stress once again that this thesis assumed a very ambitious goal which Alžběta managed to fulfil this goal very well. The presented thesis presents very interesting results backed up a carefully designed research process and promise future publication in a good refereed journal. Therefore I propose to grade this thesis as excellent (1).

## **SUMMARY OF POINTS AWARDED** (for details, see below):

| CATEGORY                              | POINTS    |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|
| Literature (max. 20 points)           | 20        |
| Methods (max. 30 points)              | 30        |
| Contribution (max. 30 points)         | 28        |
| Manuscript Form (max. 20 points)      | 15        |
| <b>TOTAL POINTS</b> (max. 100 points) | <b>93</b> |
| <b>GRADE</b> (1 – 2 – 3 – 4)          | <b>1</b>  |

**NAME OF THE REFEREE:** Barbara Pertold-Gebicka

**DATE OF EVALUATION:** 15.6.2015



**Referee Signature**

### **EXPLANATION OF CATEGORIES AND SCALE:**

**LITERATURE REVIEW:** *The thesis demonstrates author's full understanding and command of recent literature. The author quotes relevant literature in a proper way.*

|        |         |      |
|--------|---------|------|
| Strong | Average | Weak |
| 20     | 10      | 0    |

**METHODS:** *The tools used are relevant to the research question being investigated, and adequate to the author's level of studies. The thesis topic is comprehensively analyzed.*

|        |         |      |
|--------|---------|------|
| Strong | Average | Weak |
| 30     | 15      | 0    |

**CONTRIBUTION:** *The author presents original ideas on the topic demonstrating critical thinking and ability to draw conclusions based on the knowledge of relevant theory and empirics. There is a distinct value added of the thesis.*

|        |         |      |
|--------|---------|------|
| Strong | Average | Weak |
| 30     | 15      | 0    |

**MANUSCRIPT FORM:** *The thesis is well structured. The student uses appropriate language and style, including academic format for graphs and tables. The text effectively refers to graphs and tables and disposes with a complete bibliography.*

|        |         |      |
|--------|---------|------|
| Strong | Average | Weak |
| 20     | 10      | 0    |

### **Overall grading:**

| TOTAL POINTS | GRADE |                |                           |
|--------------|-------|----------------|---------------------------|
| 81 – 100     | 1     | = excellent    | = výborně                 |
| 61 – 80      | 2     | = good         | = velmi dobře             |
| 41 – 60      | 3     | = satisfactory | = dobře                   |
| 0 – 40       | 4     | = fail         | = nedoporučuji k obhajobě |